41 Hockings E-5 (1962-1977) 1980
AW50 Badaga AW50

Principles of Child Care

5.7. Underlying the practice of caring for children are certain core values about the human body which Badaga encapsulate in a few proverbs and can sometimes be persuaded to talk about. What some of these proverbs point to is a need to accept human diversity, and even deformity. One asks rhetorically, "Will all begotten children be real children?" And another proverb makes the same comment in reference to dissimilarities between siblings: "The stomach that has given birth to various people is one; those people are of different sense and different complexion." Similarly, "Are there five even fingers ?" Deformities in children are not of course welcomed—"It is bad if you have a lame child; it is bad if you see a blind man"—yet the individual should not feel embarrassed about a defect: "After the boils have formed, what if you feel shy and repugnant about them ?" Chronic illness also has to be tolerated in relatives and treated: "Even if she coughs she is our woman; even if she looks thin she is a grander woman."

Several proverbs reflect a concern with that hardy anthropological question, the relative strength and influence of nurture and of nature in the individual's personality: "Even if one has forgotten one's own begotten children, one won't forget learnt [bad] habits;" the latter are more important than inborn senses. Indeed, some people would go blind rather than give up a bad habit: "Even if your eyes become black a learnt [bad] habit won't disappear." In direct contrast, though, "Inborn habits won't go away even if you burn a man." Badagas believe that inborn habits (*huttu buddi*) are permanent, whereas learnt ones (*katta buddi*) are not.

A number of proverbs relate to the family relationships that involve children, and the way youngesters should be brought up. A certain firmness is counseled: "Children should be brought up under control, and a disobedient wife should have been sent back home." Similarly, "It is said, if the children are to be good, the mother should be good enough [herself]". Badagas believe that children acquire their qualities from the mother. Even so, "That woman will not know the nature of the girl she gave birth to." Kindness and forgiveness are valued in dealing with children. Thus, "If we caress the head of an orphan boy, our own children will grow up of their own accord" (Metz 1864: 94); "Will a child die from the stripes of a mother ?" (Metz 1864: 97); "Cats and

41 Hockings E-5 (1962-1977) 1980
AW50 Badaga AW50

parents train them, children begin blowing their own noses in this way.

5.10. During the first few weeks of life the baby's cranium is elongated by manipulation. Mothers used to be proud of this shape, but the practice is now a rare one. Beginning on the eighth day after birth, the manipulation is done every morning and night, and the limbs are also massaged. A woman warms her hands in front of the fire, covers them with clarified butter, and then presses them lightly on the infant's chest. Next the arms, thighs, legs, feet, knees and elbows are pressed strongly. The nose is pressed together from both sides, so that it becomes higher and less wide. Finally the cranium is squeezed between both hands (Jagor 1876: 196). Not knowing about this custom, a few anthropologists have commented on the anomalous dolichocephaly of the Badagas, so much in contrast with the mesaticephalic and brachycephalic crania of their ancestral homeland in Mysore (Thurston 1909: 67).

5.11. Badagas say that until the ninth day of life a baby cannot see or understand anything, although it has vision. This state may last even till the fortieth day, but usually it is after the ninth day that a baby is credited with hearing, sight and understanding. Between the fortieth and sixtieth days its understanding develops, and it recognizes its parents.

From its fortieth day the women begin to make the child laugh. It is felt they must make it laugh between then and its sixtieth day, and also make it cry by taking something away from it, otherwise the child will be considered dumb. If it will neither laugh nor cry, old people will peer into its mouth and if they can see a defect of the uvula then they know the child is dumb. There is no medicine to rectify this. If the child talks the uvula will grow; if he is silent, it will not. Till the fifth or sixth month no one should make a loud noise near the child, lest it become deaf. A child may be born dumb but it cannot be born deaf.

5.12. After the third month of a baby's life the mother will resume her normal fieldwork duties it she is poor; but if well-to-do she will wait until after its sixth month. The insecurity that an infant might feel as a result of now losing its mother's attention for many hours of each day is minimized by the care lavished on it by other female relatives, including its older sisters. Most commonly for the next few years the child's grandmother looks after it all day. (I

then dropped into gingelly oil, which boils. The material is later taken out and is powdery. About a quarter teaspoonful of this is swallowed and the child will improve.

INFECTIVE HEPATITIS (*bara ka:male*)

If however the stomach is extremely swollen and the legs thin, this is because of a *ka:male*. The treatment is then to burn the child's stomach with a piece of glowing iron or charcoal (cf. 7.9).

Chicken-pox, a common childhood disease, is also discussed later (7.2), along with the other diseases that are believed to be inflicted by goddesses.

5.38. Rue is used as a medicine for children's fever. "Even the aroma from the leaves tied in bundles and hung inside the house is said to be effective in allaying fever" (Krishnamurthi 1953 : 144).

PHTHISIS (*so:gano:*)

5.39. Fenugreek is soaked, crushed, and rolled with a little water into balls : these used to be fed to young children who were lean or suffering from "consumption."

FRIGHT (*anjike*)

5.40. When a small child falls down and is frightened, the mother immediately picks up a piece of mud from that very place and touches it to the tip of the child's tongue. This stops the child from being afraid of falling. If a child has been otherwise frightened it must immediately be covered with a blanket and given a steam bath under it, by means of water which an adult pours onto a red-hot knife blade being held under the blanket.

5.41. Generally it is an old man who knows therapeutic spells, and these are only used to cure children who are feverish and frightened; their symptoms being that they are afraid of the dark, crying at night, having nightmares, or not eating properly. A suffering child is taken to the therapist very early in the morning, since the spells have to be said before the child eats. If the therapist lives a long way from the child, he will

41 Hockings E-5 (1962-1977) 1980
AW50 Badaga AW50

visit the child's home instead. The man bathes himself, puts on clean clothes, and then sits facing the child, the therapist being on the west side and the child to his east. If the child is restive some old lady holds it. That morning before sunrise, and before any water has been brought to the house, a woman, who must be in a pure state, brings a full pot of water there: it must be from a spring. On the way back with it the woman puts three, five, seven, nine or 11 dead-nettle flowers and three pieces of Bermuda grass into the water. The therapist now picks out the grass and stirs it around in the water while he says the spells. Then he splashes the water from the grass into the child's face, and the child is of course startled. This is done three times, and after the third splashing the child must immediately be moved away to some other spot. He is then made to drink a little of the water from the pot; and the flowers are taken out of it and placed on the child's head. The pot is then carried away and the water poured out in a place where no one will walk.

This is the usual treatment for children aged three to ten. As unweaned infants cannot easily drink the water another procedure is followed with them. The mother brings her baby to the therapist early in the morning. He unties one end of his turban while the rest of it stays on his head, and flicks this end into the child's face as he says the spells. As an alternative to using the turban a twig with three or four leaves on it can be waved in the baby's face as the therapist says the spells.

It is believed that evil spirits may enter a child's body while he is startled or frightened. A therapist can drive such a spirit out by startling the child again. It is probably for this reason that the procedures just described (5.40, 5.41) are followed through (they do not however work with adults). The therapist, usually a man, also says a spell

4: Hockings E-5 (1962-1977) 1980
AW50 Badaga AW50

which states roughly: "If any bad or evil spirit is in the body, it must go away."

756
755
828

4: Hockings E-5 (1962-1977) 1980
AW50 Badaga AW50

saying anything." The man remained quiet. Then the exorcist rubbed his hand around the plate of rice, and while staring at the woman said some spells. Next he told her to come back to her own seat, and she did. Then he again told the ghost it was past 0800 hrs. and the ghost had not yet left. It replied that it would go if it were given music, hymn-singing and a picture of Murugan. Then, on a relative's suggestion, the proceedings were postponed. That evening they held a *pu:ja* in one of the houses, with this same exorcist in charge. He gave a small religious picture to the ghost, and it went away—if indeed it was ever there!

Other Mental Disturbances

8.7. Cases of insanity are rarely observed in Badaga villages, not because of their infrequency but because the victims are usually killed off by their relatives with an over-dose of opium hidden in some food. In 1970 a madman hobbled with chains could however be seen in one village, but this was very unusual. Insanity is thought to be caused by a demoness, *Ka:teri pe:* who possesses a man, takes his food from him, will not leave him, and ultimately brings exhaustion by not letting him rest properly.

8.8. Witchcraft accusations are common in many parts of India (Epstein 1959), but among the Badagas this kind of paranoid behaviour does not occur *within* the community. Witchcraft is nonetheless present, but it is only the Kurumba and Irula sorcerers and occasional Todas (Rivers 1906: 262; Francis 1908: 144) whom Badagas accuse of it. This displacement of anxiety onto members of another tribe probably helps reduce it effectively. In one recent case a newly married man was apparently experiencing sexual frustrations with his wife: at any rate, he claimed that very often as he slept with his wife at night in a room off the veranda a Kurumba came, separated the two, and built a low brick wall in the bed between them. Such a thing could occur, it was believed, because the Kurumbas had the power to open a bolted door from the outside. The only known way to curtail a Kurumba's powers is to either knock out one of his teeth or cut off his hair (and probably burn it). Important in the containment of witchcraft is the fact that each cluster of Badaga villages appoints a Kurumba sorcerer to protect those Badagas from the sorcery of his fellow tribesmen. His concern for the welfare of his Badaga hosts is expressed symbolically by the key role he plays

41 Hockings E-5 (1962-1977) 1980
AW50 Badaga AW50

754
[77

in the festivals that mark the sowing and the harvesting of Badaga crops (Francis 1908: 154). This was in great contrast to the other Kurumbas, who were "believed to be possessed of the power of outraging women, removing their livers, and so causing their death, while the wound heals by magic, so that no trace of the operation is left" (Thurston 1912: 232). An old Badaga therapist told me there is a plant species which neither goats nor any cattle will eat. The Kurumba takes a leaf of it and then with this touches the body of his victim. It opens up and he removes all of the internal organs, replacing them with any kind of rubbish. Then by touching the body opening again with the same leaf, the sorcerer closes up the wound and leaves the victim to die over the next few days. Otherwise it is said that these people can come to a Badaga village "in the form of files, dogs or cats to kill those who have refused their demands" (Benbow 1930: 11). Although the Kurumbas claim to have ceased all sorcery since a council meeting around 1956, some Badagas still fear their abilities and some Kurumbas still believe in them. Even in recent years, however, Badagas have not become the subjects of witchcraft accusation themselves.

755
828

8.9. There is a medicine to cure fear, given in a wide variety of circumstances. If for example one member of a newlywed couple feels fearful about his or her sexual obligations (cf. 3.9), a knowledgeable woman provides some of this medicine. It is made with some cockspur flower leaf, which is crushed and swallowed with water or milk, morning and night, for three or five days, beginning on a Sunday, Tuesday or Friday morning.

Some other treatments for fear have been discussed above, in the section on childhood maladies (5.40-5.41).

4: Hockings E-5 (1962-1977) 1980
AW50 Badaga AW50

It is true that different Badaga therapists may give varying diagnoses of a complaint, and the recommended treatment will vary accordingly. A patient should follow the advice of the superior and most influential among the therapists he consults. A general Badaga attitude towards "experts" is expressed in a proverb: "It is half bad if you do something you know about, entirely bad if you do it when you are ignorant." The point is that a knowledgeable person will at least know what risks he is taking: mistakes are tolerated, blunders are not, as one informant put it. An incompetent therapist or midwife may be cut down to size with another proverb: "By claiming to have qualifications he became king; by spoiling it he became a poor man."

10.15. In ancient Sanskrit texts (Charaka Samhita I, etc.) it is stated that there are three aspects to man: behaviour, mind, and health (*pittam*). Although Badaga therapists have not been able to read such texts, they do believe there are three arteries in the wrist, one controlling each of these factors. These arteries pulsate, and one can tell whether they are "good" or not. In one small village of about three hundred people where I worked there were four men who had this diagnostic skill, but none of them ever practised as a therapist. I was told that such Badagas can check the pulse, on the right wrist of a male and the left of a female, to determine which aspect of the body is upset. Its associated artery will be pulsing irregularly. Athough being a diagnostician seems to be viewed as an informal and unimportant role by Badagas, it is clear that these men actually play a crucial part in deciding whether or not a person needs some therapeutic treatment; and to this extent there is a male surveillance over the (mainly female) therapists and their work. In the village just mentioned, for instance, it is worth noting that one of the four diagnosticians was the son of the only therapist there *and* was also the traditional (though inactive) headman. The other three men commanded a certain amount of respect too because of their social positions.

10.16. Dreams are not considered to cause illness, but they are certainly diagnostic of problems to come and are treated as omens by the Badagas. So if one dreams about snakes, it means there is something impure and thus threatening in the house. If one dreams of eating honey, he will get cold and become ill. If a woman dreams of eating fruit, especially oranges, she will become pregnant before the next menses. If she dreams of losing her nose-

4: Hockings E-5 (1962-1977) 1980
AW50 Badaga AW50

or ear-rings, then her husband will die. If anyone dreams of a male buffalo, there will soon be a death in the village, probably among the dreamer's relatives (since Ya:ma, the Hindu god of death, comes riding on a buffalo). If one dreams of a woman approaching in a red *sa:ri*, this means a contagious disease will soon affect his house, his relatives or his village, usually through the disease-bearing goddess. Sometimes a person dreams of a woman in a red *sa:ri* leaving the village where there is an epidemic: this means the infection will now end.

Causation of Disease

10.17. The Badagas neither recognize any particular god as responsible for creating or curing all diseases, nor consider any one single health factor to cause all illness. As we have already seen, only a few of the diseases that Badagas cure are known by them to have a specific cause. Nevertheless we will briefly review here the variety of causes that therapists can cite.

(*a*) There are five diseases that are visited upon people by a goddess : these we have treated in detail above (7.1-7.6). A similar kind of causation was recognized for "Big Wind," where a bad spirit or deity was believed to have flicked a corner of its invisible clothing against the patient's body. Infertility in a woman is ultimately the will of God, although its immediate cause may in some instances be the failure of the couple to love each other sufficiently. Aside from these instances, however, the Badagas do not consider other chronic illnesses or bodily deformities to be inflicted by the gods : they are rather viewed as the effect of unknown sins committed by the victims themselves in previous incarnations. The will of a god and the effect of one's own or one's ancestors' sins cannot altogether be separated, however. If a person gets smallpox, for example, it means that he has done something impure; and in curing him the therapist must pray to Ma:riamma, the smallpox goddess, to forgive the patient's sins. In this way the curing process pleases the goddess and she may therefore oblige by doing what is required of her.

(*b*) Mental illness is caused by a bad spirit or bad ghost getting into the body. It is believed, on the other hand, that a person can become strong and healthy if a good ghost enters him, for it will help his body to grow.

4: Hockings E-5 (1962-1977) 1980
AW50 Badaga AW50

754 (*c*) Illness can also be the work of non-Badaga shamans or 177 sorcerers, who can send a bad spirit into the victim. As with ghost 753 possession, it has to be removed by an exorcist who knows the [755] appropriate spells. It is said that in earlier days every Kurumba who had learnt sorcery was allowed to try his power sout. This would be decided by a formal council of the tribe, who would give the novices a stipulated period, usually one to four weeks, during which the young men could test their abilities. The Badagas would then be warned of what was to come, so the villagers could take every precaution and stay indoors at night. Each youth was permitted to kill one man by sorcery during this period. Deaths in the [761] Badaga community were also occasionally ascribed to the sorcery of Todas (Rivers 1906: 261, 635); and Kurumbas say there are many Badaga sorcerers too.

828 (*d*) Emotional and mental problems are otherwise said to be the 753 result of sins done by a man's ancestors, whereas bodily diseases 783 are in most cases an effect of the patient's own sins, as in the case of ulceration cited below (see *i*). Thus if the wealthy man becomes poor, or a poor man becomes rich, he attributes the change of fortune to the deeds of his ancestors. If a man lacks appetite, or does not enjoy his life or possessions, then he has a sickness resulting from the sins of his ancestors. There is no cure for it; and so if many cures are attempted and none works, it is thereby known that he has an illness caused by ancestral sin. Leprosy and mental diseases are seen as ultimately caused by that same sin. (As an explanation for the therapist's impotence this is of course very effective.)

732 (*e*) Often we find frequency of an infirmity being explained as 826 an effect of "blood." For example, in one family there are two girls and five boys. One boy and both girls are normal, but three other boys are deaf and dumb, and one is fairly deaf but can talk. As the situation was explained to me, "there must be some wrong in the parents' blood." This is perhaps still an allusion to ancestral sin.

753 (*f*) More immediate causes of some illnesses lie in one's diet or 261 bodily activities, even in uncleanliness. Among the dietary problems there is a general malady called *so:lu*, "over-heat," caused by eating insufficient milk products. Eating bad food, or eating too quickly, can also bring unfortunate results.

753 (*g*) Over-exertion may dislodge the colon or an artery and bring 826

776 dismount. He should not urinate in a stream, either; nor should he stand up while
779 urinating on the earth, for this shows disrespect to the earth goddess. He should
782 always squat down to urinate or defecate, and for fear of disrespect the buttocks
(514) should not be directed toward the sun at this time. But apart from such minor regulations for personal conduct the gods of nature receive little attention, except when the water-goddess has not brought rain in time. Then the villagers will say prayers and make offerings at one of their temples in an attempt to get the favor of a rainfall.

775 The fourth category of supernatural beings is the ghost. This is the wan-
779 dering spirit of a person who chanced to die before he was destined to, and it frequently gets inside a living person to find warmth and food. The malicious
(789) ghosts can cause a lot of trouble, but there is no use in worshipping them. When a ghost becomes bothersome it is exorcised by a man noted for this art, who gives it whatever material requirements it may (through the mouth of the possessed person) demand. Ghosts cannot usually act as intermediaries between men and gods; but there is a special category who become angels. These are dead people who have done good during their lives, but who for some reason want to return to this
•(828) world rather than be merged with god. While they are waiting to be reborn to a
(787) higher social status they act as the messengers of god, and come to people in their dreams to warn them of impending disasters.

776 The fifth category of supernatural beings is the demon, who is periodically
779 propitiated with a blood sacrifice or some liquor. This is a being who is incapable
782 of doing good, but may do harm if he chooses. He is thought capable of killing people that he meets at night, and of obstructing various projects. There are no temples to the demon, but there are recognized places in the fields where offerings are left for him, just as there are recognized places for leaving things that